



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

the observance of the ceremonial might or might not follow, fully or partially, according to the zeal of the proselyte. This universal and Hellenized side of the Jewish faith was represented by Philo Judaeus, a contemporary of Christ.

AUTHORITIES.

Scripture which ends 442 B. C.; thereafter Josephus. Various Encyclopaedias; the School-System of the Talmud by Spiers; *L'éducation et l'instruction des enfans chez les anciens Juifs*, par Jos. Simon; *Geschichte der Erz. u. des Unt. bei der Israeliten* Von B. Strassburger; Van Gelder's *Die Volkschule des jüd: Alt: 1872*,* Schürer's *Jewish People in the time of Christ*; Milman's *History*; and references to Schmidt, and Graez and Düncker's *History of Antiquity*; also to Professor Robertson Smith's *Writings on the Semites*.

S. S. Laurie.

University of Edinburgh.

THE MASTERY OF ENGLISH.

“The rarest excellence in literature is good prose.” So said Mr. Warner at the Literary Congress. We shall not feel the full weight of this assertion without reflecting how enormously prose that essays to be “good” exceeds in amount the whole bulk of compositions in verse. Such an assertion, if true, ought to set educators diligently to thinking. When every educated man is supposed to be able to write good English, how is it that faultless prose is the rarest of all literary products?

Doubtless, for one reason, because its excellencies are so subtle, varied, and unobtrusive. The tyro in criticism can scan verse and point out a “gouty foot,” an imperfect rhyme, or a halting cadence; but to say just why this passage in prose is or is not harmonious, to show precisely how the rhythm of a prose sentence fails to suit the included thought, is one of the ultimate attainments of criticism. Cicero points out the fact that vigorous and symmetrical thinking tends naturally to find expression in rhythmical and well-rounded forms of speech; and bluff old Cato gives us his epitome of rhetoric in four words *rem tene, verba*

* The amount of talk and the poverty of fact in these books combined would be incredible to any one not accustomed to German writers. Even in the *Dictionnaire Pédagogique*, the French writer makes certain inferences on very slender foundations of fact.

sequentur. But we make a mistake that Cicero did not make when, for these or any other reasons, we leave English prose style to take care of itself. It is probable that no English writer has ever studied his own tongue as an instrument of expression with the care which Demosthenes bestowed upon Greek, or Cicero upon Latin. Something to say does not of itself ensure something well said. In spite of all the recent advances in the study of teaching of English, I believe there is room for added emphasis upon matters fundamental and essential.

Two propositions undergird this discussion. Let me state them : First, in a liberal education, the mastery of English should be the chief business of an English-speaking student. This sounds like an axiom ; but call it, if you please, only a postulate. To master English one must do far more than acquire a style. The power to comprehend is first and chief ; for, however much a man may learn from Greek or Latin, German or French, the greater part of his lessons in life's long university will be set in his mother tongue. Familiarity with our noble literature, with the best that has been thought by Englishmen and said in English speech, is also understood ; and close after these attainments ranks the power to express. This is the consummate flower of culture, that a man shall gain power to set forth the best there is in him, and glorify it in the saying. Latin, Greek, Mathematics, Philosophy must be studied indeed, but they are studied amiss unless their combined effect enhance the power of English speech. Who cares that Gray could write Latin verse with classic elegance ? The least of his English poems is worth them all ; and his Elegy is worth more than all the Latin verse that Englishmen ever wrote. What matters it that Boileau found Addison's Latin worthy of his rare praise ? or that Milton's genius would shine out even through the opaqueness of a foreign tongue ? The English that these men wrote is the only sufficient proof of their culture, the only adequate outcome of all their study. There are single lines in Milton's great epic, yes, single epithets, that are more worth than all the Latin verse he wrote. No one cares to say a thing in Latin as he said it, but ah ! to sing one song in English as he could sing it.

My second postulate is this : To *master* English, we must study *English*. This seems more clearly axiomatic than the former proposition, but its truth is ignored or denied by a large propor-

tion of educators. The denial appears in the preparatory school, when we are told that the boy can learn English grammar from the Latin. And stubborn indifference to this truth is evident in the common notion often formulated by teachers, that if a man has something to say, he will have no trouble to say it. That is, style is not a thing to be cultivated more than the shape of a man's nose. Bend all energies to attain discipline first, information next. Have something to say, and you will find no difficulty in saying it well. Under the influence of such ideas thousands of studious young men are trained to-day and have been for generations.

Now it is not only untrue that the study of foreign languages directly tends toward the formation of a good English style, but the opposite is exactly true, that these studies by themselves alone would make idiomatic English impossible. We can hardly rate too highly the rigid study of Latin and Greek as a means of discipline, as a means too of discovering those elements of style that constitute universal rhetoric; those elements that are neither Greek nor Latin, neither English nor German, but are native to cultivated minds in every land; but to form an idiomatic English style by studying Xenophon, Demosthenes, Cicero, and Goethe, is no whit more feasible than to learn entomology by studying shells or botany from bugs. Indeed, only the most careful and painstaking instruction can prevent pupils from acquiring clumsy and un-English forms of expression while they are wholly occupied with the study of foreign tongues. If left to himself the pupil will transfer words and idioms which he should translate, and displace the homely Saxon which he learned at his mother's knee by the stilted phraseology of the lexicon.

As a matter of fact, the style in which most men express their thoughts, whether at the bar, in the pulpit, or through the press, is simply an accident; sometimes it is a very happy accident, but oftener not. Untold thousands of volumes lumber the shelves of our libraries, which contain all the thought-substance essential to great books; but they are little books and powerless, because they were not cast in literary form. The expression is stilted, or it is commonplace; it is verbose or obscure; it is the natural result of no painstaking, or of effort misapplied in the capital matter of English style. Many text-books and treatises for the use of students are incurably dull, and are read simply because

the hunger for knowledge is the best possible sauce, and can make literary hard-tack palatable. Yet it is not necessary to be dull in order to be scientific, or to convey exact knowledge. When John Burroughs tells us about birds' nests, or Dr. Abbott of flying squirrels, or Huxley of matters more abstruse, the reader learns no less of science because he looks at facts through the achromatic medium of a limpid style.

I assume, therefore, the truth of these postulates: that the mastery of English should be the chief business of an English-speaking student, and that English can be mastered only by studying English.

In this matter of mastering our mother tongue, we need first of all to know words. A certain class of words we must know as we know our own faces, our own hearts. They must not seem to come, when we need them, as from afar, but they must be on our tongues, or ever we are aware. Every man that attains fluency in the use of speech has this sort of words, this inner circle of intimate indwellers of his mind, and they form the basis and determine the chief characteristics of his literary style. Are they short, sharp, Saxon words, going straight to the heart of things like sword-thrusts? Then his style is Saxon, too. He may lack grace in utterance, but he'll not lack strength more than a battle-axe. Is his mind cluttered with sesquipedalian vocables gathered with perverse diligence while studying every language but his own? Then he will write Johnsonese, or electrify a Sunday school by telling them that "epitome is synonymous with synopsis." Such a man can not write good English, he can not speak good English, and saddest of all he can never learn to do so; for it will be impossible by any effort he has time to make, to purge his mind of this rubbish and fill the emptied chambers with right words.

Every word that a man uses is one that he has seen or heard. The stock of words thus gathered before the age of twenty-one will never be changed in its general character. It will be enlarged greatly by the addition of technical terms, and the thousands of words with which a man needs a speaking acquaintance in order to feel at ease amid the varied walks of literature; but when he sets himself to weave a literary fabric with his own hands, he will find that the warp is already in place and much of the woof as well, and he can only choose a little between this

ornament and that, a flower here, a stripe there, while the body of the fabric is already fixed by a succession of educational accidents.

Consider now the matter of reading. Neither teacher nor pupil can choose the child's companions before school days begin. Good words with wrong meanings, words that are no words at all, grammar as homespun as his jacket, phrases as clumsy as his boots,—all these and more are rooted in the young mind like sturdy growths in virgin soil. What can the teacher do? Constant criticism irritates and discourages, vexes parents, too; for the teacher's strange notions are carried home and old ignorance will not learn from young wisdom.

This can be done. Give the boy a good book. If the first choice be not a happy one, try again and again; make a reader of him or her, or all is lost. Oftener, the academy must bring the bright boys and the right books together and make them friends. But how many academies, I wonder, are still without a library worthy of the name? Too often far, the young man enters college still unacquainted with pure English speech. Most of the errors of his boyhood abide with him, mixed with others learned since, and a jumble of rules that confuses all; and now what advice is given him? Possibly what I was told, and what I believed, until the day of some most precious things was past forever.

Said an honored instructor to me, "I am not troubled about filling my mind; if I can get the capacity, I have no fear about filling it." He doubtless meant it true, but I received it false. It confirmed in me a tendency too strong already, and in college I read nothing.

It is true that our first need is capacity. But the capacity for some things is born with us, and grows faster than our bodies do. Who would think of trying to develop in the child a capacity for asking questions? The little toddling interrogation points know the art quite well enough already. And does a boy need to wade industriously through Euclid, Caesar, Xenophon, and the rest, in order to win ability to like a story, to thrill at a battle scene, to admire a hero? Nay; and he can learn a good Saxon word at ten easier than at twenty, far easier often at five than at twenty-five. Bring your studious boy through college then, knowing Latin syntax and synonyms better than English, more

critical in Greek accent than in English pronunciation, knowing Caesar and Livy better than Parkman and Prescott, Virgil better than Milton, Cicero better than Webster, Sophocles better than Shakspere, classic mythology well, but Pilgrim's Progress and Crusoe, Hans Anderson and Cervantes, Spenser and Scott, Tennyson and Longfellow, Dickens, Thackeray, Hawthorne and Eliot little or not at all, and I dare affirm that the natural order of mental development has been wrenched out of joint, and the harm can never be repaired.

Recurring to DeQuincy's division of all literature into two classes, the literature of knowledge and the literature of power, let us think chiefly of the latter sort. The books that inspire, I mean, whose chief business is to arrest attention, bring all the powers into glowing focus, and thus reveal to the soul how hot it can become, what dreams there are to dream, what sights to see, what high ends to accomplish. These are the books for youth to read, and many of them must be read in youth or never with advantage. Some of the very greatest books are essentially for young hearts. The early literatures of every nation were written for children, that is, for men and women with the child's heart in them, with his easy faith in the marvellous, his indifference to subtle analysis and refinements of thought or style. Hence many of the world's classics are essentially boy's books. Homer in racy English, with the names somehow made pronounceable, would be the greatest boy's book in the world.

Get capacity first? Never will this boy have so much capacity as now for acquiring words that are pictures and stories of great deeds grandly told. His mind is sensitized, its processes are photographic. He receives without analysis and admires without criticism. At twelve or fifteen, he may see Achilles invested with all the mythic glory that seemed so real to the Greeks themselves; but when he puzzles him out in the epic dialect, aware all the time of the Wolfian scepticism about Homer, and the criticisms on the unity of the Iliad, and sees clearly the clumsiness of the celestial machinery, Achilles is to him a shrivelled and faded hero, stalking dim and shadowy in his still more ghostly armor.

Imagine, if you can, honored Professors, a freshman class thus trained in English before entering your class rooms, already baptized in living fountains into the fellowship of our English tongue.

They have learned mythology, not from dry-as-dust dictionaries, but in Hawthorne's *Wonder Book*, Kingsley's *Greek Heroes*, Charlotte M. Yonge's *Stories of Great Nations*, and in whatever noble versions they have read of Greek and Latin authors. They have learned much of English synonyms, not so much by studying Crabbe, as by reading the authors which Crabbe read in order to write his book; and hence the definitions of the dictionary really define for them a Latin word or a Greek, and the acquiring of vocabulary is easy work. And in the class room, elegant translation is no longer the exception, suggesting "Bohn," or a desperate attempt to toady to the Professor, but easy and idiomatic English is the rule. Translations by college boys are crude oftentimes, simply because they have not words enough at their command to say with grace the thing they have to say. They are yet in the imitative stage, in the childhood of English training and can only imitate the constructions on the page before them. But let us carry our ideal freshman class a little further.

With the elementary work in English training well under way, the college could teach rhetoric with effect. Able Professors would not be obliged to waste time over trivial details, but could lead their pupils into the higher ranges of the subject, the philosophy of style, and the adaptation of style to the special ends which composition may propose to itself.

It is a fashion with some good people to decry rhetoric. But true rhetoric, in the slightest possible estimate, is at least the seemly dress of our thought. Like the dress of gentlefolks, it should be suited to the rank and work of the thought that dons it. We should as soon go to the drawing room in shirtsleeves as send a thought forth to the world half-dressed. Rhetoric like dress should be conspicuous only by its appropriateness; if it is studied for itself, as end and not as means, as body and not as raiment, it may bring a writer to shame and put contempt upon his thought. How then shall it be studied? Broad canons, few but true, are more serviceable than a multitude of rules.

Still dealing more with the work done outside the class room, let me suggest the application of the scientific method to rhetorical studies. Does the geologist require the textbook of his pupil, and then expect him with broken stones, and clay and sand to build a section of the subterranean world? He takes him to the quarry where the Framer of worlds folded the mighty leaves of

Nature's book, and bids him read therein. He could learn more facts from his paper book in one hour than from the quarry in a week, but only Nature's book can make him a scientist. Set the learner then a-roaming in the fields of literature, no longer aimlessly as he read in boyhood, but with a definite quest; and thus teach him language and its laws at once. If there are established canons which aid to clearness, that chiefest of the literary graces, invite the student to discover in this chapter of Addison or Matthew Arnold whether the canons of the books are observed or not. If this other student is threatened with a congestion of adjectives, bid him compare his pet essay with this masterpiece of Macaulay or Whipple or Holmes. Require him to determine which piece has the more adjectives in proportion to its nouns, and how often these writers use an adjective to add force merely, without an added thought. If the student is utterly commonplace in every word and phrase, send him to Carlyle; if he chops everything to mince meat, send him to Jeremy Taylor; in whatsoever part he is ignorant or misinformed, put him at work in language possessing in eminent degree the virtues he has missed, and require tangible evidence that the work has been done. The instructors in such a course must needs be wise, but who can doubt that students thus instructed would accept the canons of rhetoric not upon sheer authority but as true in the nature of things. Their knowledge of the literature would also steadily increase, and the critical studies of the later years in college would be based on an adequate knowledge of the material with which criticism has to deal.

A course of training like this, and as much better as experience could make it, might secure some adequate knowledge of our best English books. A great book cannot render us its full service at one reading. It will often impart far more of its precious self at the second reading, or the tenth. Robert Collyer tells us of the books he read when a boy, from which he gained the sturdy Saxon that makes his speech a power. Pilgrim's Progress was the greatest book, I remember, and in all there are only five or six; and because they were few, he read them again and again, until their words and phrases were as familiar to him as his mother's were. Scott read border tales and ballads during his college days more zealously than his Greek and Latin. This was not wise, doubtless; he should have preserved a juster balance between

two equally important lines of study ; but many a greater mistake has been forgiven to smaller men ; he read those border legends at the proper time. Had he slaved at his lessons to the neglect of reading, he might in after years have been a good historian, a fine professor of literature, or even as good a novelist as some that had preceded, but "the Wizard of the North " the world would still be waiting for.

It hardly needs be said that through all these years, the practice of writing should keep pace with the student's growing knowledge of words, of the laws of language, and of style. At the age when little besides stories can awaken interest, we must not expect the boy to be didactic, or logical, or original. Set him to writing out the stories he tells his mates, the stories his mother tells him. If he works in good toothsome bits of Saxon as they stand in the printed book, rejoice at it, and let him write them over and over until they become his own, until he has long forgotten where he learned them. In their time, require analysis, unity, proportion, rhetorical finish, and lastly adaptation of style to widely differing themes, but only as the student learns what these things are, and has seen and felt them in the work of others.

But some lover of the good old ways will say, " But this is imitation. I believe in developing the individuality of students. You will never make a great writer by imitation."

My ancient friend, can you talk ? If so, how far is this power due to your individuality ? How large a part of your vocabulary have you " evolved from your inner consciousness ? " How many grammatical forms and laws have you originated ? There are doubtless some minor features in your conversation that are peculiarly your own, just as there would have been a distinctive quality in your chatter, if you had been brought up among monkeys.

There is something comical in this fear of being an imitator. There is no art from penmanship to painting in which the first steps at least are not of necessity imitative. And it is quite premature to assume that, in this undergraduate student, there is any individuality as a writer that is worth developing, except through the constant influence of good models. When he has practiced writing until obedience to established canons has become a habit, until the conscious effort to adapt style to matter has developed an unconscious sympathy between thought and expression, then

and not before, set our young knight of the pen in the field and bid him follow his bent. If he has native power, this inner force will speedily mould his style into something that all the world will call his own. Nine-tenths of it has come of imitation and could be nothing else. His thought looks forth from the printed page with a face substantially like every other English face ; but the soul within has added that mysterious tenth which makes the face his own. Individuality, in its proper order, has become his last teacher, and has wrought well because there were materials with which to work. Somewhat like this, I think, was the training which Maupassant received. The result was an immediate and almost unvarying success.

Great painters paint at first in the style of their masters. Great musicians compose sometimes for long in the style of others. Great poets wake at first but echoes of the elder bards. No Iliad, no Aeneid ; no Aeneid, no Divine Comedy ; and by the music of those older songs, the "God-gifted organ-voice of England" was attuned to sing "of man's first disobedience and the fruit whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe."

And shall we leave this sophomore student to rely upon his individuality for his style ?

And now what have we been saying ? It is our chief business as students to make our own the words and wisdom of our mother tongue. This must be done by long and loving intercourse with the master spirits of our literature, and by choosing wisely the books that are best for us at different periods of our development ; and the schools should set this work abreast of any that can be mentioned.

Let the colleges raise many fold their requirements in our English tongue. Let them name in their catalogues, not five, but fifty books, and every one a classic. Grade them roughly in five classes with reference to the changing tastes of studious youth from twelve years old to seventeen. Require that half at least of each grade shall be familiar to every student that knocks at college doors. Five years ought to furnish leisure sufficient for bright boys to become intimate with twenty-five good books ; and the knowledge that this reading would be of service by-and-by would save them from wasting time on penny-dreadfuls.

When entrance examinations come, ask first a full account of the candidate's course of reading. What books have you read ?

Which ones have you read two, three, or four times? Write from memory fifty lines of your favorite poet ; the plot of your favorite play ; sketch your favorite hero. In a word, set questions that would awaken interest, and by drawing out what the pupil could do best, find out his strength and weakness.

Make it certain, moreover, in the minds of instructors who prepare young men for college that after a given date this work will be required. Advise with them through conventions and the public press regarding the best books to awaken young minds and the best way to use them. Create an interest in this vital matter as vast as our indifference has been.

Then let the professors in our colleges with fervid breath bring the enthusiasm to a white heat and keep it so, until the sins and heresies with tongue and pen are burned and purged away. Every teacher in college ought to aid in this work. A demonstration in Geometry is not less conclusive when stated in good English ; a Greek paper is not less accurate because it is written neatly, in words well chosen and arranged. In a word, let idiomatic English be reckoned indispensable in every exercise. I am aware of the tremendous revolution that must take place before such conditions can be fulfilled. Some learned men, possibly incapable themselves of English, will doubtless smile at a young man's dream ; but there may come a time when we shall invoke, not alone the fair sisters from the top of distant Helicon, but more fervently still the spirits of power that breathe upon our English race ; when the student shall live his college days in conscious fellowship with master spirits speaking to him as familiarly as his mother spoke. Cicero against Catiline will stir his blood, but not more than Burke against Warren Hastings. The courage and eloquence of Demosthenes inveighing against Philip of Macedon he will admire ; but by as much as the destiny of these United States, in this nineteenth century, is more significant than the fate of Greece two thousand years ago, by so much the more will he admire the noble words of our own great orators that hastened in their time the decision of mighty issues ; Webster in reply to Hayne, Henry Ward Beecher storming the very strongholds of English prejudice and staying in mid-air the nation's hostile arm, Lincoln at Gettysburg, compressing the heart-throbs of a nation into fewer words than ever said so much before,—these were also great ; these were our brothers and our countrymen, they plead

for righteousness and human brotherhood ; they and their fellows, on either side of the Atlantic, are to us a grander legacy than Marathon to Athens. And when our systems of instruction shall be rounded out to their completion, the great books that our English-speaking men have made shall do their proper part in making men.

John Greene.

Colgate University.

ON SUPERVISING PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

In his argument that appears in the September issue of the *SCHOOL REVIEW*, urging government supervision of private schools, Dr. Mackenzie is clearly right in the statement that school supervision is a leading question in education at the present day. But surely he must expect that many interested in education will take issue with him when he lays down the proposition that private schools should be so supervised.

While men may agree that our entire educational system has faults that should be relieved, there must in the nature of things be a wide variance of opinion as to the corrective principle to be applied.

There can be no doubt that lack of unity of purpose, definiteness of aim, and coherence of organization is the distinctive defect of educational institutions in the United States to-day. The absence of proper relations between secondary schools and colleges, and of uniform requirements for admission to college, the inequality of the work leading to the bachelor's degree, and the almost total lack of adequate requirement for admission to most professional schools are the results of antecedent conditions that have tended to bring educational matters in our country to their present unfortunate status.

Educational traditions and methods among us are the out-growth of our own peculiar environment and conditions of life. Freedom, liberty, and absence of restraint of older conventionalisms mark the distinctly American movements in politics and sociology. Education, too, among us has been evolved from conditions and facts that were present, at home with us ; not foreign,